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1½ hour from starting arrived at the Derb el Hadj, which runs from Suez to Akabah. On the left is a perpendicular sandstone rock, 7 or 8 yards high, with red and white strata. The road descends to the sea; it is from 30 to 40 feet wide, cut out of the solid rock, and truly magnificent, resembling the scientific alpine routes of Europe. Large masses of stone piled up on the left, where there is a precipice, serve as a parapet. The scene calls to mind the Apennines. At intervals the dark blue sea is seen below, with the high chain of mountains beyond it. A strong N.W. wind rendered the weather somewhat hazy. The road called Nagb continues to descend, and over conical rocks of a dark-brown colour and volcanic appearance, the broad expanse of the sea now became visible. On several of the sections of the surrounding chalk hills I observed strata of black flintstone. The last part of the road which we travelled over, 3½ hours after starting, and which leads to the sea, is called el Mhasserat. Four hours after starting we descried Akabah, indicated by a green stripe of palm-trees. A hollow way brought us, ½ hour later, to the sea-shore, which we followed in an E.S.E. direction for 1¼ hour. It was 1 o'clock when we pitched our tents under the palm-trees of Akabah near the fort. During our ride along the shore I observed a mirage.

From Akabah I proceeded to Petra, through the Wadies el Araba, Garandel, Abu Shebe, &c.; from Petra to Hebron, through the Wadies el Araba, Figgeri, over Mount E'Sáfah, through the Wadies el Gubba, Athaige, Sikke el Kermel, &c.

V.—*Notes on Depuch Island.* By Captain WICKHAM. Communicated by Captain BEAUFORT.

DEPUCH ISLAND, on the N.W. coast of New Holland, is in lat.  $20^{\circ} 37\frac{3}{4}'$  S., and long.  $117^{\circ} 44'$  E., and presents a singular contrast with the low, flat shores of the mainland, from which it is only a little more than a mile distant. It is of a circular form, nearly 8 miles in circumference, and its summit is 514 feet above the sea.

This island is merely a vast pile of large blocks of greenstone, heaped up in rugged and irregular masses: it has much the appearance of basalt, and in many places the long, flat-sided blocks resemble columns of that formation. Here and there in the valleys, and upon the more level spaces near the summit, is a slight sprinkling of soil that nourishes a few stunted gum-trees, shrubs, and a coarse wiry grass; but, generally speaking, the island is void of vegetation, and has altogether a very different

appearance from the mainland and the other islands of Forester's group, of which it is the largest.

With the exception of Depuch Island, the other islands of this group are very low; each being merely an accumulation of sand, upon a base of light-coloured rock, that is composed chiefly of sand and shells. They are in some places thickly covered with brushwood and coarse grass, and their greatest elevation is not more than 50 feet.

All these islands are connected to the mainland by extensive flats and ridges of sand, which in many places become quite dry at low-water spring-tides, and afford great facility to the natives in reaching them for the purpose of procuring turtle and fish. Indeed, as nothing was seen to lead us to suppose that canoes are used on that part of the coast, it appears more than probable that it is only at such periods they are able to visit them.

Depuch Island appears to be their principal resort, probably on account of the water they find amongst the rocks after rainy weather, and the facilities afforded them in the exercise of their talent for drawing representations of whatever they have seen upon the flat surface of the rocks of which that island is formed.

From the vast number of specimens of the art, the natives seem to have amused themselves in this way from time immemorial; and from the very hard nature of the stone, and the accuracy with which many animals and birds are represented, they deserve great credit for patient perseverance, and for more talent and observation than is usually bestowed upon the natives of New Holland; and to their greater credit be it told, that, amongst the numerous representations we saw, none were observed to tend in the slightest degree towards obscenity.

The method pursued in tracing the different subjects appears to be by cutting the surface of the rock with sharp-pointed pieces of the same stone; and as the exterior of all parts of it is of a dark reddish-brown colour, the contrast becomes great when that is removed and the natural colour of the greenstone exposed. It is difficult to conjecture what many of their drawings are intended to represent, but others are too well done to admit of a moment's doubt. Probably many of the inferior performances were the work of the children.

From the summit of the island we had a good view of the mainland for several miles from the sea; and, with the exception of a few isolated rocky hills of the same greenstone, or basaltic formation, that are 6 or 7 miles from the shore, it appeared to be very low and level. Many places had a very white appearance, as if covered with a salt incrustation, and the whole was intersected by creeks that extended a long distance in, and probably flood a great part of this extensive flat, when spring-tides are

accompanied by the strong north-westerly winds that are at times felt upon this part of the coast during the prevalence of the westerly monsoon.

While the *Beagle* remained at Depuch Island no opportunity offered of communicating with the natives, nor did they visit the island during that period. They were seen on the shore of the mainland upon one or two occasions; but as soon as any attempt was made to approach them in the boats they fled precipitately. Like most of the natives of that country who have never seen Europeans, they are timid, and probably treacherous when their numbers exceed those of the opposite party. The following trifling circumstance justifies this apparently harsh suspicion. Mr. Fitzmaurice (mate), while employed in a whale-boat in surveying a part of the coast a little to the eastward of Depuch Island, entered a creek for the purpose of ascertaining its extent, but had not proceeded far before his progress was stopped by the near approach of the mud-banks, rendering it too narrow for the oars. He was not long in this position before he was startled by a loud shout, and the appearance of a party of natives rushing simultaneously from the mangroves on each side of the creek: they stopped at a short distance from the boat and made threatening gestures, by brandishing their spears. No doubt violence would have ensued had he persisted in his attempt to proceed farther into the creek, but he very properly backed his boat out, and retreated; it being, perhaps, better, when practicable, to allow the natives to imagine themselves the stronger party than to teach them experience upon such a subject by the use of fire-arms, which must have been resorted to had spears been thrown.

There is a very good and well-sheltered anchorage off the sandy beach on the N.E. side of Depuch Island; but with this exception, it offers no inducement to visit it again. A trifling supply of fire-wood may be procured from the stunted trees that grow in some of the valleys; but water is not to be depended upon at all seasons of the year, although there were evident marks of a very bountiful supply during the rains. We dug wells wherever a level spot held out any prospect of success; but our labours were generally obstructed by reaching a bed of white calcareous rock, from 9 to 15 feet below the surface. With one well in the sandhills at the N.E. bay we succeeded in reaching to the depth of 21 feet, where we found a bed of sandstone, sufficiently soft to yield to the united effects of pickaxes and crowbars: the laborious work of cutting through this was carried on a few feet farther, when our exertions were stopped by a stream of water flowing in as salt as the ocean. Fortunately a small reservoir was discovered by Mr. Bynoe, the surgeon, while climbing amongst the rocks in search of a fresh meal, from

which we got about 6 tons of indifferent rain-water, but at the expense of very harassing labour, as it was carried on the men's shoulders, in 7-gallon barricoes, over the most rugged path one can well imagine. This supply enabled us to remain a few days longer on the coast, when we were compelled to cross over to Timor, for what was not to be procured on the inhospitable and sandy shores of N.W. Australia.

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*Description of some of the Drawings sent along with Captain Wickham's Paper.\**

- No. 1. appears intended to represent a goose or duck.
- 2. A bird that is found near some of the rivers in the southern parts of N. Holland, and in some degree resembles a Guinea-fowl.
- 3, 18, and 82. Boomerangs.
- 4. Probably a swan.
- 5. An ibis.
- 6. A beetle.
- 7. Seal or otter.
- 11. Can this have any reference to fishing by moonlight?
- 12. A shield; also a native with spear and shield.
- 13. A dance of native children.
- 16. A native armed with spear and womerah, or throwing-stick, probably relating his adventures, which is usually done by song, and accompanied with great action and flourishing of weapons, particularly when boasting of their prowess.
- 17 and 18. The print of a foot in the mud or sand.
- 19. Probably meant to represent the eggs of the emu, as laid in the nest.
- 20. Ducks.
- 21 and 22. Plants.
- 23. Probably a shark.
- 24. A native dance.
- 28. Unless the natives have an idea that the earth is globular, it is difficult to conceive what is here meant, as animals and human beings are intermixed.
- 29. A tree or shrub.
- 30. A native in a hut, with portions of the matting with which they cover their habitations. The huts we saw at Depuch Island were constructed by fixing boughs and twigs in the ground in a circular form, and joining the smaller ends overhead in the form of a bee-hive. This is covered with a loose matting of grass, being merely long shreds of twisted grass fastened in the middle to a cord of the same material; the ends hang loosely down.

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\* Lithographic impressions of the drawing of the rock on which the figures are found, and also of some specimens of the figures, with the numbers prefixed to them in this list, accompany this Part of the Journal.

31. Is probably the hooded iguana, or some reptile of that description.

32. Sharks.

34. A corrobory, or native dance.

35 and 36. Impressions of birds' feet in the mud.

37. Land or water tortoise.

42. Turtle.

51, 53, 62, 63. The native companion.

52. Pelican.

55. A kangaroo, wounded by a spear.

56. Snake, &c.

60. A kangaroo.

61. A native dog.

65. A crab.

67. A kangaroo.

68. Appears meant to represent the sea-slug, or *bèche-le-mer*.

70. Is probably some animal or insect with which we are unacquainted.

71. Appears to be a bird of prey, having seized upon a kangaroo-rat.

73. Appears to be meant for an iguana, probably that described by Dampier.

76. A burial-place. In the southern parts of New Holland a well-cleared and secluded place is chosen; frequently a circular mound is raised over the body, round which several narrow circles are described. These places are held sacred, and kept exceedingly neat, and free from shrubs; frequently the trunks of the surrounding trees are carved over with various devices.

86. Probably an otter.

87. Kangaroo and emu.

92. May probably be meant to represent a native afflicted with a similar disease to that from which the natives in parts of Africa frequently suffer.

94. Appears meant to represent two natives in some particular costume. This drawing was upon the face of a very conspicuous block of stone in Watering Valley, and from 40 to 50 feet over head.

The drawings that are shaded throughout show those where the surface of the stone was entirely cut away: the others were only in outline.